



Seven Thoughts for The New Year

Rabbi Micah Greenstein ~ January 1, 2016

If we can just be more loving, tolerant, respectful, and grateful, 2016 will certainly be a great one, no matter what lies ahead. Here are seven additional thoughts:

1) The things that matter most in life have to be renewed or else they grow stale. Friendships, marriages, relationships, whether new or old, have to be ever-growing. Don't ever take the people who matter most in your life for granted.

2) I once heard it said, "Those who give must never remember and those who receive must never forget." It's not what you've got that counts. It's what you give. Find deeper purpose and meaning in 2016 by giving more and getting less.

3) To live without knowing how temporary life is makes our living trivial. Overcome whatever fears you have by embracing the preciousness of each day.

4) "How powerful a presence is his absence." Nine years after the death of someone very close to me, it's amazing how present that person still is in my life. I'm certain others who have suffered losses will agree. Remembering loved ones doesn't return us to what we had, nor does it allow what we had to return to us. But there is great comfort in remembering.

5) In this new year filled with global fear and radicalization, counter it by spreading goodness and co-existence wherever you live. Too much violence has been perpetrated in the name of religion. We need to start making goodness contagious, no matter what your creed or politics. If divine unity means anything, it means that One God means one humanity. Look out for the image of God in every human being you encounter.

6) At the end of each day, make it possible for you to look back and say to yourself, "Today, my mother/father would have been proud of me." I find my best days are when the choices I make and things I do for others would have made the people who have shaped me most proud.

7) I write this en route to the pathbreaking educational initiative which is making a stunning impact on the traumatized nation of Cambodia. (www.harpswellfoundation.org). These first-ever college women in Cambodia, children of the attempted genocide and actual murder of 2-3 million in '76-'80 have taught me something we need in our nation and in our lives: resilience. The pain, suffering, and adversity the Cambodian people have suffered is staggering (hand to hand machete genocide versus the Nazis who created a buffer and bureaucracy of death between themselves and their victims). The resilient response of the Cambodian people and these 84 top female leaders is also striking. They are determined not only to survive but to live with joy, respect, compassion, kindness and the vision of a better tomorrow. It's remarkable how genuinely kind these women and the Cambodian people are despite their poverty and adversity. You get to know these girls and their families and you find yourself saying, "They have nothing and yet they still have something I want." What they have and what's available to us all - the key in my humble opinion - is gratitude. Not for stuff, but for life itself. Gratitude for this new day and for every breath we take.

The best way to live each day in 2016 with passion, purpose, and love, is to live gratefully.

Happy New Year!

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